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NOFORN

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, EAP/J; NSC FOR E. MILLARD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [CE](#) [JA](#) [NO](#) [IN](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Japanese envoy Akashi reviews preliminary plans for donors' conference and possible U.S. role

Refs: (A) Tokyo 770 (Notal)

- (B) Colombo 113, and previous

(U) Classified by Lewis Amselem, Deputy Chief of Mission. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY: In a February 13 meeting with the Ambassador, Japanese Special Envoy Akashi reviewed preliminary plans for the Tokyo donors' conference in June, noting that exact details still needed to ironed out with the GSL. Japan felt that U.S. participation was important in giving the event credibility. He remarked that his next stop was India where he planned to press the GoI to participate in the conference. Akashi was well-briefed, but Japan's exact role still needs further refinement in light of Norwegian involvement and Indian sensitivities. END SUMMARY.

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Akashi Reviews Plans for Conference  
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12. (C/NF) Ambassador Wills and DCM met February 13 with Yasushi Akashi, Japan's Special Envoy on Sri Lankan issues. Akashi related that his latest visit to Sri Lanka was going well. (Note: Akashi also visited Sri Lanka in January and met with the Ambassador at that time -- See Ref B.) The Ambassador asked Akashi how plans were proceeding regarding Japan's hosting of the international donors' conference for Sri Lanka due to be held in Tokyo, June 9-10. Akashi replied that exact details for the conference still needed to ironed out with the Sri Lankan government. He planned to have a long meeting that night with Prime Minister Wickremesinghe plus key Ministers G.L. Peiris and Milinda Moragoda to discuss how the conference should be organized. The U.S. would be briefed regarding the meeting's conclusions as soon as possible, he added.

13. (C/NF) Akashi went on to note that the GoJ had some preliminary notions regarding the conference that he could share. The current idea was to have four co-chairs -- Japan, Norway, the EU, and the U.S. This model had worked for last year's Afghan reconstruction conference. As host, Japan planned to do most of the work involved in putting the conference together. That said, Japan was committed to consulting fully with the other co-chairs on the format of the conference. The co-chairs, for example, would have to work closely together in drafting a declaration for the conference. Much of the work on the declaration could take place closer to the timeframe of the conference.

14. (C/NF) Continuing, Akashi noted that much thought had to go into the exact role of representatives of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) at the conference. Japan's current thinking was that the group would definitely not have equivalent status with the GSL. In addition, nothing should be done to enhance the group's position that was not absolutely necessary. Ambassador Wills noted that exact plans regarding how to handle the LTTE could be modulated closer to the timeframe of the conference per the group's pattern of behavior. Some flexibility in this regard could serve to reward the LTTE for positive moves regarding the peace process, while a negative pattern of behavior could be dealt with in a different manner. Akashi said he thought that approach made sense.

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Possible U.S. Role  
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15. (C/NF) When asked for more information about the possible U.S. role, Akashi said the GoJ felt that U.S. participation in the conference was important in giving the event credibility. Akashi said he strongly hoped that the U.S. would serve as a co-chair and that Deputy

Secretary Armitage could participate, as he was a real

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"drawing card." The Ambassador noted that the Deputy Secretary was keen to participate in the conference, if

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at all possible. Akashi noted that GoJ representatives had met with the Norwegians to discuss how the November 2002 Oslo conference was structured as regards interactions between the LTTE and donors, such as the U.S. Japan wanted the U.S. to know that it was sensitive to this issue and would work closely with us to ensure that there were no potentially embarrassing encounters with the LTTE, including photos, at the June conference.

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Re India  
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16. (C/NF) In response to a question, Akashi said he continued to work the India angle. He noted that he planned to meet India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka later in the day and his next stop after Sri Lanka was India. In New Delhi, he planned to meet with National Security Adviser Mishra and some other officials. He would urge the GoI to participate in the donors' conference. Akashi said he thought the Ministry of External Affairs was not very flexible regarding Sri Lanka. Mishra was more flexible, but even he was constrained by the anti-LTTE domestic political dynamic. The Ambassador asked whether he planned to meet Congress Party leader Sonia Gandhi and Akashi said he had no such plans this trip. The Ambassador noted that India had made clear that it supported the peace process on many occasions, but it really needed to take a more visible role. Indian influence, for example, might be an important factor in getting the LTTE to take the first step toward disarmament and demobilization.

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Other Items  
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17. (C/NF) Akashi also briefly touched on the following items:

-- Prabhakaran: Akashi noted that he had received an invitation some time ago to meet with LTTE leader 1V. Prabhakaran. He was thinking of possibly doing so in early March when senior Tiger negotiator Anton Balasingham visited Sri Lanka. Such a meeting might be useful in probing Prabhakaran's exact thoughts on the peace process.

-- Kumaratunga: Akashi said he planned to meet President Kumaratunga on February 14. During his last visit, she had cancelled her meeting with him on very short notice, but had sent him a nice letter of apology. He asked the Ambassador whether it was likely that the president might dissolve Parliament and call new elections at some point in the next several months, and, by doing so, disrupt the donors' conference. The Ambassador responded that he did not think Kumaratunga would do this, but it was in the realm of the possible.

(Note: Akashi took some flak from one of the president's press spokesmen the other day. The spokesman accused Akashi of portraying himself as an "adviser" to the GSL. Akashi, in fact, has never claimed to be that, although he is an adviser to the GSL-LTTE humanitarian issues sub-committee. In addition, some anti-peace process elements, including in the press, have hit out at Akashi, accusing Japan -- wholly inaccurately -- of having a soft spot for the LTTE. End Note.)

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COMMENT  
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18. (C/NF) As he was in our last meeting with him, Akashi was highly articulate and well-briefed about the Sri Lankan situation. He underscored that Sri Lanka was important to Japan as a way to show its foreign policy to be "positive" and "activist." All that said, it is clear that Japan's exact role in the peace process still needs further refinement in light of Norwegian involvement and Indian sensitivities. At one point in the conversation, for example, Akashi used the past tense in discussing Norway's role as peace facilitator, almost as if Japan was waiting in the wings to take over. Our guess is that the GoN would not have been happy to hear that. Moreover, based on what we hear, India is still not thrilled with the GoJ's emerging role. Japan needs to draw these threads together if it wants its effort to be fully effective. END COMMENT.

19. (U) Minimize considered.  
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